

Fostering Harmony Amidst Diversity: Religious Moderation and its Role in the Social-Political Contexts of Malaysia

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Abstract

This article specifically examines the dynamics and challenges of Islamic moderatism in Malaysia in the socio-political landscape. This is an important issue to be explored further, because lately moderation and radicalization in Islamic discourse have not only affected political stability but also social conditions in plural Malaysia. The writing of this article uses qualitative methods in the process of data collection and analysis. By using a deductive approach by understanding the arguments and opinions of academics and credible and academically tested literature sources, it becomes the main reference in the preparation of this paper. The result is that the Malaysian government promotes moderate Islam through state initiatives in instilling moderate Islamic values such as (Islam hadhari, wasatiyah, and rahmatan-lil-'alamin). The societal response to radicalism and liberalism in Malaysia involves various government and NGO initiatives, including public education, talk shows, publications and seminars. These efforts aim to monitor and reduce the influence of liberal Islam, which is perceived as a threat. The existence of social media as a stream of technological development also plays an important role in shaping moderate Islamic discourse in Malaysia, serving as a platform for the dissemination of moderate views and countering extremist narratives. The involvement of other elements such as the role of Islamic parties in shaping moderate policies in Malaysia is significant in understanding and adapting to Malaysia's complex political dynamics. They strive to balance Islamic principles with democratic values, thus promoting a more moderate political discourse.

Keywords: *Religious Moderation, Harmony, Malaysia, Diversity, Socio-Politics*

Abstrak

Artikel ini secara khusus mengkaji dinamika dan tantangan moderatisme Islam di Malaysia dalam lanskap sosial-politik. Hal ini menjadi isu yang penting untuk ditelusuri lebih jauh, karena belakangan ini moderasi dan radikalisasi dalam wacana Islam tidak hanya berpengaruh pada stabilitas politik, tetapi juga pada kondisi sosial di Malaysia yang majemuk. Penulisan artikel ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dalam proses pengumpulan dan analisis data. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan deduktif dengan memahami argumen dan pendapat para akademisi serta sumber-sumber literatur yang kredibel dan teruji secara akademis menjadi acuan utama dalam penyusunan tulisan ini. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pemerintah Malaysia mempromosikan Islam moderat melalui inisiatif negara dalam menanamkan nilai-nilai Islam moderat seperti (Islam hadhari, wasatiyah, dan rahmatan-lil-'alamin). Tanggapan masyarakat terhadap radikalisme dan liberalisme di Malaysia melibatkan berbagai inisiatif pemerintah dan LSM, termasuk pendidikan publik, talkshow, publikasi, dan seminar. Upaya-upaya ini bertujuan untuk memantau dan mengurangi pengaruh Islam liberal yang dianggap sebagai ancaman. Keberadaan media sosial sebagai arus perkembangan teknologi juga berperan penting dalam membentuk wacana Islam moderat di Malaysia, menjadi platform untuk penyebaran pandangan moderat dan melawan narasi ekstremis. Keterlibatan elemen lain seperti peran partai-partai



Islam dalam membentuk kebijakan moderat di Malaysia sangat penting dalam memahami dan beradaptasi dengan dinamika politik Malaysia yang kompleks. Mereka berusaha untuk menyeimbangkan prinsip-prinsip Islam dengan nilai-nilai demokrasi, sehingga mempromosikan wacana politik yang lebih moderat.

Kata kunci: Moderasi beragama, Kerukunan, Malaysia, Keragaman, Sosial-Politik

Introduction

Religious moderation plays a crucial role in stimulating tolerance and social harmony in a heterogeneous global order. Emphasizing values such as balance, justice, and respect for differences is essential in counter-extremism and the promotion of peaceful coexistence. The next section will elaborate on their significance and implementation in contemporary society. Moderation reflects the principles of moderation, tolerance and justice, as affirmed in the Qur'an. The concept of “*ummatan wasathan*” indicates a balanced community, which is fundamental in maintaining harmony in a multicultural society (Ramadhan et al., 2024).

In the era of globalization, religious moderation has significant urgency in tackling radicalism and promoting tolerance values (Hutagalung, 2023). An interdisciplinary approach in Islamic studies has the potential to improve the understanding and adaptability of Islamic teachings to contemporary issues. Although Islamic moderation offers concepts or teachings of peace and tolerance, challenges in its implementation still exist, especially in areas exposed to radical ideologies (Saumantri et al., 2023). One country that is unique and interesting to be studied more deeply regarding the challenges to the dissemination of interfaith tolerance is Malaysia. When viewed from a historical portrait, the entry of Islam in Malaysia dates back to the 13th century, with the Malay sultanate playing an important role in its spread and integration into local culture (Samsidar et al., 2024).

The evolution of Islamic thought in Malaysia has moved from traditionalism to modern revivalism, reflecting the dynamic interaction between religion and the needs of contemporary society. To date, the religious majority in Malaysia is predominantly Muslim. As per the 2020 census, Islam dominates 63.5% of the population, equivalent to 21.9 million; followed by Buddhism at 18.7%; than by Christianity at 9.1%; Hinduism at 6.1%; and 9% others including Sehuwa, Sikhism, Taoism, Confucianism and Animism (Stekom, 2020). Until 2024 Indeed, the tenets of Islam in Malaysia emphasize the values of wasatiyyah, universality and balance, which facilitate harmonious social interaction among diverse races and religions, promoting unity and understanding in its pluralistic society (Meerangani et al., 2022). Understanding the dynamics and challenges of Islamic moderatism in Malaysia is crucial due to the country's unique socio-political landscape, where Islam plays a fundamental role in shaping identity and governance.

The interplay between moderation and radicalization in Islamic discourse affects not only political stability, but also social cohesion among Malaysia's plural population. This understanding is crucial to addressing contemporary issues and fostering a harmonious society. Historically, Muslim identity was seen as a bastion of moderate Islam, but recent trends show an increase in radical sentiments, influenced by global geopolitics and local socio-economic factors (Akhmetova, 2019). The rejection of moderation by some muftis in issuing fatwas can

lead to extremism, highlighting the need for a balanced approach in religious rules (Ismail & Baharuddin, 2022).

Previously, there were some previous researches that can be used as references in finding a space for academic studies in exploring more about religious moderation in the Malaysian context. First, Mohd Roslan Mohd Nor examined the importance of religious tolerance in Malaysia, which had previously experienced conflict between Muslims and Christians (Nor, 2011). Furthermore, Ibrahim Abubakar examined a similar matter, but more specifically examined the importance of religious moderation and tolerance in the midst of religious plurality in Malaysia. Abubakar views that tolerance is not only beneficial in terms of social relations, but also helps economic growth (Abubakar, 2013). The same thing has also been written by Mohd Shukri Hanapi, he studied wasathiyah with an epistemological approach and its application in Malaysia (Hanapi, 2014). Then Wan Kamal Mujani, Ermy Azziaty Rozali and Nor Jamaniah Zakaria also examined the same thing, focusing on the implementation of wasathiyah Islam in Malaysia through a speech delivered by Prime Minister Dato' Sri Mohd Najib bin Tun Abdul Razak (Mujani et al., 2015).

Paul Kim also examines moderation in Malaysia, but he is only limited to theoretically reviewing the concept of inclusion-moderation (Kim, 2019). The next article was born from the thoughts of Mansoureh Ebrahimi, et al. However, the focus of their study is to see the extent to which international students in Malaysia perceive Islamic moderation (Ebrahimi et al., 2022). Then a normative-academic study using a fiqh approach in dissecting religious tolerance and moderation was written by Kurnia Muhajarah and Moh. Erfan Soebahar. They tried to compare three countries as a comparison of the application of religious tolerance in the context of Southeast Asia, namely Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand (Muhajarah & Soebahar, 2024).

The next inter-country comparative study has been written by Ahmad Hermawan and Jesus Alberto Valero Matas, which looks substantively at religious moderation as a forum for establishing inter-religious relations in Indonesia and Malaysia. This study seeks to find points of similarity and difference in the social and cultural contexts of the two countries in implementing religious moderation (Hermawan & Matas, 2024). Finally, there are research results from Sudianto, et al. They only focus on examining the implementation of religious moderation at Islamic Higher Education Institutions in the border areas of Indonesia and Malaysia (Sudianto et al., 2025).

From some of the previous studies above, the difference with this article is the emphasis on the side of religious moderation as a driver of harmony in the midst of religious-tribal diversity in Malaysia with a socio-political portrait. Another objective is to identify the challenges and prospects of religious moderation in Malaysia in the present and future. This article is expected to be an addition to the academic treasury, especially in the field of the development of religious moderation in Malaysia. Other benefits are intended to complement the study of moderation and the development of Islam, especially in a socio-political perspective.

Research Method

This research uses a qualitative approach in the process of data collection and analysis. Qualitative research focuses on efforts to obtain non-numerical information that can provide



information about the background of a problem in detail (Creswell, 2015). Thus, this research is oriented towards qualitative methods through written data analysis to find out the social and political factors that influence religious moderation (*wasathiyah*) in Malaysia and the challenges in maintaining religious moderation in Malaysia. The information used in this study was obtained through an inductive approach by examining secondary sources that are relevant to the issues in this study, and the inferred data strengthens and explains the root of the problem. Data analysis is done using a deductive approach by understanding the arguments and opinions of academics and anything derived from them that is relevant to the area of concern of this research. This approach is used to describe the problem or phenomenon under review and then the research findings will be used to generate specific conclusions that are appropriate to the research problem (Miles & Huberman, 1984). The data collected through inductive and deductive methods, thus summarizing the basic principles of plural interaction in Malaysia according to the Islamic perspective.

Result and Discussion

A. The Basic Concept of “Wasathiyyah” Religious Moderation

The concept of moderate Islam, also known as *wasathiyyah* Islam, is a term derived from the lexical combination of “Islam” and “*wasathiyyah*”. The term “moderation” in Arabic is translated as “*al-wasathiyyah*”, which is etymologically rooted in the word “*wasath*”. Al-Asfahaniy defines “*wasathan*” as “*sawa'un*”, which indicates a middle position between two extremes, or it can also mean justice, a balanced position, or prevalence. Furthermore, “*wasathan*” also implies avoiding uncompromising attitudes that may even deviate from the principles of religious truth (Tim Penyusun Bimas Islam, 2022).

Furthermore, the term *wasathiyyah* is often synonymized with *al-iqtishad*, with the derivation of the subject *al-muqtashid*. However, at the applicative level, *wasathiyyah* is more commonly used to represent a comprehensive paradigm of thought, especially in the context of religious attitudes in Islam. Meanwhile, in the Arabic lexicon, the concept of moderation is commonly termed *wasath* or *wasathiyyah*, and individuals who practice it are called *wasith* (Kamali, 2015). The word “*wasith*” itself has been adopted into the Indonesian language with three main meanings: 1) mediator or intermediary (e.g. in the context of trade, business, and the like), 2) facilitator or reconciler between disputing parties, and 3) referee. Linguistically, according to Arabic linguists, the term refers to “everything that is good according to its object”. An Arabic adage states that the best of all things is that which is in the middle. To illustrate, generosity is seen as the middle position between stinginess and extravagance, courage as the balance point between fear and recklessness, and other examples (Kamali, 2015).

Linguistically, *wasathiyah* or moderation is defined in terms of two main aspects: the reduction of violence and the avoidance of extremity. The term “moderate” refers to an individual who is reasonable, middle-of-the-road, and not excessive. In the English context, the word “moderate” often corresponds to the meaning of “average”, “core”, “standard”, or “impartial” (Mas'ud, 2018). In general, moderation can be understood as a constructive effort in maintaining harmony at the level of views, values, and character, both in interpersonal interactions and in relations with government structures. In Islamic literature,

the concept of moderate Islam is commonly associated with *ummatan wasathan* and identified with “*wasathiyah Islam*” (Shihab, 1999).

Furthermore, al-Qurthubi (d. 1273 CE) interpreted *al-wasath* as “avoiding excess and deficiency (*mujânibâ li al-ghuluww wa al-taqshîr*)” (Abdullah & Mohamad, 2025). Thus, it can be concluded that the phrase *al-wasath* and the concept of moderation, which both imply avoidance of extremity, being in the middle, or impartiality, have comparative connotations of meaning. In the Qur'an (Q.S. al-Baqarah [2]: 143), Allah says, “And thus, We have made you (Muslims) a people of moderation (*wasathâ*), that you may be witnesses to the people and that the Messenger (Muhammad) may be witness to you.” Imam al-Thabari (d. 923 CE) interpreted *ummatan wasathan* in this verse as *khiyâr*, which means chosen. Another implication contained in the phrase is the principle of impartiality or justice (Schwartz, 2007).

Al-wasath is also conceptualized as the space between two extremes. In a theological perspective, Allah swt. calls Muslims *ummatan wasathan* which indicates their moderate religious practices and avoidance of excess. Imam Fakhruddin al-Razi (d. 1209 CE) identified four lexical significances of the word “*wasath*” in the Qur'an. First, it means '*adl*' (justice), which represents the principle of impartiality. This meaning coheres with the concept of *al-bu'du 'an tharafayn al-ifrâth wa al-tafrîth*, which articulates the condition of being “distanced from two extremes” (Azisi, 2023). The avoidance of extremes is seen as a prerequisite for the achievement of justice. Second, *wasath* means “*khiyâr*” (the best or chosen). Third, the word implies “*aktsaru fadhîlâ*” (the most excellent or superior). Fourth, *wasath* refers to the attitude of moderation in the implementation of rituals / worship and various religious activities (Azisi, 2023).

Furthermore, the development of this conception of moderation by academics into nine fundamental values. First, *Tawassuth* (taking the middle way), which refers to the understanding and practice of religious teachings that avoid *ifrath* (excessive attitude in religion) and *tafrith* (attitude of reducing religious teachings). Second, *Tawazun* (balance), which is a proportional understanding and practice of religion that covers all aspects of life, both worldly and *ukhrawi*, with firmness in distinguishing between *inhiraf* (deviation) and *ikhtilaf* (difference) (Bimas Islam, 2022). Third, *I'tidâl* (straight and firm), which means putting everything in its proportion and exercising rights and fulfilling obligations fairly. Fourth, *Tasamuh* (tolerance), which is the recognition and respect for differences, both in religious aspects and various other aspects of life. Fifth, *Musawah* (egalitarian), which is not discriminating against other parties based on differences in beliefs, traditions, or personal origins (Nur, 2015).

B. History and Development of Religious Moderation in Malaysia

Historians have not agreed on when Islam entered Malaysia. If it is estimated to enter the Southeast Asian region, they have provided many arguments. Just as Islam entered Indonesia through Arab traders in 674 AD, when they landed on the coast of Sumatra. In the early centuries of the beginning of Islam, this religion has not yet touched the territory of Malaysia. However, in the 11th century the development of Islam was marked by the Trengganu Stone Monument found in Kuala Barang, Trengganu (Rohman, 2020). This



stone is a lettered stone that uses Arabic writing, but speaks Malay, so it is alleged that Islam has spread in the region. The discovery of the Trengganu inscribed stone is historical evidence that can be used as a benchmark for the development of Islam around Southeast Asia. The Trengganu inscription stone is dated 4 Rajab 702 Hirjriyah or coincides with February 22, 1033 AD. Then in the 12th century Islam only entered the Malaysian region through Muslim traders from India (Rohman, 2020). This is known when sultan Madzafar Syah I in that century embraced Islam through a trader from India.

It is recorded in history that Islam began to be embraced evenly by the population in Malaysia in the 12th century, coinciding with the entry of Islam in India and Indochina. Islam entered Malaysia brought by traders from Arabia through Malacca which at that time was the center of trade, the traders stopped at the ports of the peninsula. Islam entered Malaysia through the central role of the Malay sultanate, which began to spread and develop Islamic teachings since the 13th century, facilitated by political power and trade relations that rooted Islam in the culture and identity of the Malay people (Samsidar et al., 2024). Since the 1980s, Malaysia has experienced a renaissance characterized by lively da'wah activities and Islamic studies by intellectuals (Nasaruddin R. & Hasanuddin, 2022).

The role of Islamic institutions such as JAKIM (*Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia*), Fatwa Majlis, and Islamic universities in promoting Islamic moderatism in Malaysia is diverse, focusing on education, legal interpretation, and community guidance. These institutions are crucial in fostering a balanced approach to Islam that emphasizes social harmony. JAKIM's role in managing Islamic affairs in Malaysia and emphasizes the need for efficient human resource development within the institution (Awang et al., 2019). JAKIM plays an important role to manage Islamic affairs and improve human resources through various development programs namely PMI (*Program Modal Insan*). This PMI program can bring various positive benefits to the organization.

Fatwa Majlis or fatwa institutions in Malaysia play an important role in interpreting Islamic law and guiding the Muslim community (M. H. Rosidi, 2024). However, these institutions face a variety of modern challenges that affect their effectiveness and relevance. The main obstacles faced by Malaysian fatwa institutions, include conflicts between traditional jurisprudence and contemporary societal issues, the impact of technological advances, and demands for increased transparency and accountability. Islamic universities play an important role in integrating Islamic and modern knowledge, producing graduates who are competent in addressing contemporary challenges (Idris et al., 2019). Islamic universities are also instrumental in grounding programs such as *Talaqqī* al-Quran bersanad offered to foster Quranic education, emphasizing the importance of traditional learning methods, such as the University of Malaya and KIAS (*Kolej Universiti Islam Antarabangsa Sultan Ismail Petra*) (Mohamad et al., 2021). While these institutions significantly contribute to the development of society, they must continue to adapt to modern challenges to maintain their relevance and effectiveness in a rapidly changing world.

The Malaysian government promotes moderate Islam through initiatives such as Inculcating Islamic Values, Islam *hadhari*, *wasatiyah*, and *rahmatan-lil- 'alamin*, which aim to develop a modern society and ensure these concepts are understood and accepted by Muslims and non-Muslims alike (Zamri, 2019). Instilling Islamic values began in the 1980s,

this approach aims to integrate Islamic principles into daily life (Zamri, 2019). The intertwining of Malay identity with Islam has shaped political narratives, fostered a sense of unity among the Muslim majority and managed the dynamics of a multi-religious society (Shukri, 2023). Malaysia has also embedded *Ahlu Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah* in its laws, in an effort to maintain a moderate Islamic stance and address extremist ideologies (Al-Akiti, 2022).

The Malaysian government, under Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, promoted moderate Islam through Hadhari Islam, emphasizing progressive values, cooperation with the international community, and addressing economic development, scientific progress, and global security, while fostering a peaceful, multi-religious, and multi-cultural society (Ali, 2016). *Wasatiyah* and *rahmatan-lil-alam* are concepts to continue the trend of advocating moderation and compassion in Islam, with a focus on community development and interfaith dialog.

C. The Dynamics of Religious Moderation in Malaysia: A Socio-Political Portrait

Societal responses to issues of radicalism and liberalism in Malaysia are diverse, involving both governmental and non-governmental efforts to address these challenges. The rise of liberal Islam is perceived as a threat, prompting various educational initiatives and public discussions to counter its influence. Simultaneously, the government has implemented deradicalization measures to combat religious extremism, especially in response to groups such as ISIS, emphasizing the need for a holistic approach involving educational and religious institutions (Mohd Nor et al., 2022).

Societal responses to radicalism and liberalism in Malaysia involve various government and NGO initiatives, including public education, talk shows, publications and seminars. These efforts aim to monitor and reduce the influence of Liberal Islam, which is perceived as a threat (Majid et al., 2011). Society against radicalism in Malaysia also involves addressing extremist influences on social relations, emphasizing peaceful religious education, and recognizing the importance of internal factors alongside external influences in shaping attitudes towards radicalism and liberalism (Akhmetova & Jaafar, 2020). Despite these efforts, the emergence of extremist discourse, particularly through social media, poses an ongoing challenge, suggesting that societal responses must continue to adapt to evolving threats.

Social media also plays an important role in shaping moderate Islamic discourse in Malaysia, serving as a platform for the dissemination of moderate views and countering extremist narratives. The interaction between different groups on these platforms highlights the complexity of religious discourse in the digital age. Social media platforms such as Facebook and YouTube are used by moderate Islamic figures to promote messages of religious moderation, effectively reaching a wider audience (Iswanto et al., 2022). The Mufti Department in Malaysia, although not uniformly active, has begun to engage with the public through Facebook, seeking to discuss Islamic law and discourse (Ashaari et al., 2020). In terms of countering extremist narratives, social media also serves as a battleground against extremist ideologies, with moderate voices actively challenging radical narratives (Iswanto et al., 2022). Despite the potential of social media, challenges such as cyberbullying and the

dominance of radical voices remain, complicating the landscape of Islamic discourse (Awang et al., 2019). The effectiveness of moderate discourse is often hindered by the power and reach of extremist narratives, which can overshadow moderate voices.

The relationship between moderate Islam and pluralism in Malaysia is characterized by a commitment to harmony and mutual respect among diverse religious and ethnic groups. This dynamic is largely influenced by the concept of *Wasatiyyah*, or moderation, which promotes inclusiveness and understanding in a multi-ethnic society. The role of moderation as a unifying principle is seen as critical to fostering unity among Malaysia's diverse population, encouraging peaceful coexistence and respect for different beliefs (Norasid et al., 2022). *Wasatiyyah* principles are rooted in Islamic teachings, emphasizing balance and justice, which are essential for maintaining social harmony in a pluralistic society (Meerangani et al., 2022). Many scholars in Malaysia recognize religious pluralism as a positive aspect, advocating interfaith dialogue and religious tolerance (Hilmi et al., 2022). Despite the acceptance of diversity, there is still a degree of institutional separation among different religious communities, which can make interaction difficult (Fatima & Tasgheer, 2022).

Global influences on moderate Islamic policies in Malaysia are shaped by historical, political and socio-cultural dynamics. These influences manifest through the interaction of domestic Islamic movements and international perceptions, particularly in the post-9/11 geopolitical context. Islamic political participation significantly influenced policymaking, with parties advocating Islamic values shaping the political landscape (Haikal, 2024). Malaysia's foreign policy emphasizes moderate Islam as an ontological security strategy, aiming to counter negative post-9/11 stereotypes (Chan, 2023). The state uses image-building strategies to position itself as a model of moderate Islam, balancing domestic Islamic identity with international expectations.

The role of Islamic parties in shaping moderate policies in Malaysia is significant, especially through the evolution of parties such as Parti Amanah Negara (AMANAH) and the transformation of *Parti Islam Semalaysia* (PAS). These parties understand and adapt to Malaysia's complex political dynamics, seeking to balance Islamic principles with democratic values, thus promoting a more moderate political discourse. AMANAH was formed by progressive leaders from PAS who sought to reclaim a moderate Islamic political narrative, emphasizing inclusivity and democracy (Malik, 2017). The shift from a rigid Islamic ideology to a more democratic approach is evident in PAS' recent political strategy, which focuses on universal issues such as justice and governance rather than strict implementation of Sharia (Mohd Zain, 2014).

Islamic parties have significantly influenced Malaysia's governing dynamics, pushing for policies that reflect social justice and religious identity while engaging in the democratic process. The concept of a "benevolent state" introduced by PAS illustrates a move towards moderate governance, aiming to address the well-being of all citizens rather than simply promoting an Islamic state (Saat, 2014). Despite this progress, the moderation of Islamic parties remains contentious. Critics argue that this shift may be superficial, as the underlying ideological commitment to an Islamic state remains, potentially undermining genuine democratic engagement.

D. Moderation The Best Path to Social Harmony

The significance of “religious moderation” is growing, mainly triggered by the increasing tendency among religious believers to rashly label others, especially adherents of different faiths, with various pejorative stigmas such as “atheist”, “agnostic”, “secular”, “*kafir*”, and “heretic”. Individuals who internalize the values of moderation in religion tend to be very careful, even avoiding the act of uttering hate speech or verbal aggression aimed at denigrating individuals or groups with different religious backgrounds. The concept of “religious moderation” facilitates a process of deep self-reflection, thus avoiding a narrow and superficial mindset in understanding and practicing religious teachings (Kamali, 2015).

Furthermore, “religious moderation” plays a role in developing the intellectual capacity and autonomy of individuals to be more responsible in expressing their religious beliefs in the context of pluralistic social reality. Thus, based on the previous elaboration, two primary arguments underlying the urgency of implementing religious moderation are identified. First, the existence of intolerance as the foundation for the flourishing of radicalism. In a landscape of difference and diversity, intolerance presents a significant threat because it tends to ignore uniqueness and impose uniformity in a pluralistic reality. If not immediately anticipated through the implementation of religious moderation, religious practices have the potential to fall into extremism that manifests as violence, even terrorism (Hutagalung, 2023).

Secondly, the potential for intolerance in a context of plurality like Malaysia often correlates with absolute truth claims, resulting in the stigmatization of other groups or religions as erroneous simply because of differences in the source of teachings, dogma, or scriptures. The urgency of religious moderation lies in the fact that the condition of intolerance in plurality manifested in truth claims actually reduces the noble essence of religions that assert that Divine Truth transcends the limits of human rationality (Sivan & Friedman, 1990). This allows the truth to be approached and understood through various perspectives, and practiced flexibly and adaptively. “Religious moderation” empowers individuals to perceive others, including followers of different religions, not as threats or antitheses, but as opportunities and strategic partners in realizing religious values in real life. In the present, moderation becomes the foundation for striving to achieve goodness in the next life.

Conclusion

The role of Islamic institutions such as JAKIM (*Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia*), Fatwa Majlis, and Islamic Universities in promoting Islamic moderatism in Malaysia is diverse, focusing on education, legal interpretation, and community guidance. The Malaysian government promotes moderate Islam through initiatives such as inculcating Islamic values, Islam *hadhari*, *wasatiyah*, and *rahmatan-lil-'alamin*, aiming to develop a modern society as well as ensuring these concepts are understood and accepted by Muslims and non-Muslims alike. The societal response to radicalism and liberalism in Malaysia involves various government and NGO initiatives, including public education, talk shows, publications and seminars. These efforts aim to monitor and reduce the influence of Liberal Islam, which is perceived as a threat. Social media also plays an important role in shaping moderate Islamic



discourse in Malaysia, serving as a platform for the dissemination of moderate views and countering extremist narratives. The role of Islamic parties in shaping moderate policies in Malaysia is significant, especially through the evolution of parties such as *Parti Amanah Negara* (AMANAH) and the transformation of *Parti Islam Semalaysia* (PAS). These parties understand and adapt to Malaysia's complex political dynamics, seeking to balance Islamic principles with democratic values, thus promoting a more moderate political discourse.

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